

J. H. HAMNER'S BIOGRAPHY

Editor's Note

When J. H. Hamner, 83 year old Panhandle pioneer, died at Claude, the entire Panhandle mourned. Mrs. Phoebe K. Wagner, grieved and beloved throughout Texas and especially in the Panhandle for her work among rural women in women's clubs of the cities, who is a long time friend of the family, wrote the following eulogy and biographical sketch of the famous old deceased pioneer.

"I would do God I might do something for my country." These were the words of J. H. Hamner, spoken during the recent war, spoken in million tones to his loved ones, who knew that only the infirmities of years prevented his being in action. And this person, 78 years old, of eighty three years, fought his last fight Thursday, September 21, 1922, and received his honorable discharge to go to his Glyndon home. A soldier of the First Christian Church of Claude of which Mr. Hamner had been a member since its establishment. The battle was fought by the soldiers of the Fort Donelson when the bone of his leg was shattered by the bullet that kill'd all the horses that had carried him into action.

It was then the Claude boys were being mustered into service that he planned that short but earnest career to be of service to his country. He had suffered all his life since or less, for his country, but as pure was his patriotism that he deemed it a sacred privilege to serve in the end. His country meant his God because it meant a service for all humanity, and it grieved his very soul to see anyone shirk this privilege.

The whole world has just a rational but hazy picture of how much spirit when the life of J. H. Hamner was transferred to the better world. Even Nature herself entered into sympathy with those he loved and next to his home and his God he loved Nature. The greatest joy of the sum of his life was to sit in the shadow of the old sprawling trees and remember the hours spent under the shade of the great old trees. He could not bear the remnant of a pain generation next, surely. Those answered to the call that day comrades Brummett, Baker, Banks, Miles, Vineyard and Hamner, who wore the Gray and Saw their光荣 with the Blue. Today comrades Bow, Shuler, and Hamner answer to the call of the invisible army called by our Great Commander, God.

A gentleman of the old school whose numbers are fast passing, kind, gentle, courteous, dignified, unassuming, we are assured of one thing: When Mr. Hamner talks with those of his friends in the Celestial City he will say only good of all he has left behind.

A kind and loving husband, his thoughts were always of those dear to him. His yearning of the future so far as himself was concerned, he hoped to live beyond the days of his little companion that he might be able to convert her to living her last days. Many times he fondly referred to Mother Hamner and her condition and to the daughter who for many years has day to day and by night responded to every call no matter how great the demand of health and strength.

The next day they left their old home to join their daughter, Mrs. Laura V. Hamner in the new home the had prepared for them in Amarillo. Three weeks later while away on a short vacation from the Panhandle of Texas, locating here in Claude where they resided in their old home in the city of his childhood and he again entered the service of the Army.

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Bravery in fighting for those principles inspired my admiration; while his charity to his fellow man impressed me with the fact that there is something good in the worst of us and I have never since been able to think a man all bad because he possessed one fault.

"Mr. Hamner was one of those Southern gentlemen, too fast passing away, whose word was his bond, who believed the greatest creation of God was man and who could have given his life to protect her. His country called and he hesitated not to answer. His community or his neighbor called and there was no delay.

"I thank God it was given me to know him as a real father, to be intimately associated with him and to receive from him present and example which I truly have made a better man. I am happy that I was permitted to enter his house and to see there the ideal home which made of his home the place God designed it to be. And now after nearly a century of service to the fellow man, a service won in infirmities and always exerted for the right he has gone to his reward."

In an old notebook of Mr. Hamner, was found a quotation from Tennessee, written in his youth, and evidently expressing his ideals:

"Who ever sold the truth to serve the hour, Nor perished with eternal God for power?"

On page 1769, Vol. IV of Texas and Texans, is found this sketch of Mr. Hamner's life: "Among the newspapermen of West Texas there is perhaps none better qualified and with a more diversified experience than James Henry Hamner for twenty years proprietor of the Claude News. He was born in Shelby County, Tennessee, November 28, 1839.

Mr. Hamner was reared in Tennessee where he attended the local schools. He took up the trade of printer and for ten years was associated with Commissary Appell of Memphis. Mr. Hamner was an ardent Southerner and when the war broke out his young heart beat responsive to the call and he gladly enlisted with General Bedford Forrest when the latter organized his battalion. From then on to the end of the war, from battlefield to battlefield, he followed his leader with faithfulness, and marked courage.

After the war was over he took up life again with nothing but head and hand and heart as assets and handicapped by a wound that proved a life long annoyance. As a boy he made his way to the south, he had clung to the ladder of life alone and he did. He sought shelter again and he did. It took years to regain his health. He received his discharge at Lawrenceville, Alabama, May 10, 1865. Two years later he was married on April 1, 1876 to Mrs. Laura Hendrix Parker of Marion, Alabama. They returned to Memphis, Tenn., and established this first home in the city of his childhood and he again entered the service of the Army.

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